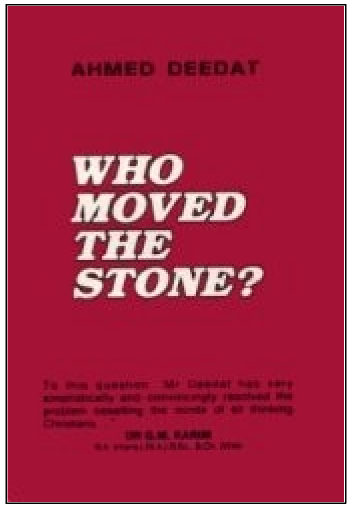


WHO MOVED THE STONE?

By Ahmed Deedat

"WHO MOVED THE STONE?" or "who ROLLED away the stone?" (Mark 16:3) is a Question, which has worried theologians for the past two thousand years. Mr. Frank Morison, a prominent Bible scholar, tried to nail down this ghost(s) in a book bearing the same title as this tract. Between 1930 and 1975 his book has gone through ELEVEN editions. Through all his 192 pages of conjectures he failed to answer,**"WHO MOVED THE STONE?"** (Faber and Faber, London). On page 89 of his book, he writes, **"We are left, therefore, with the problem of the vacant tomb unsolved"** and proceeds to advance SIX hypotheses, very nearly knocking the proverbial nail on the head with his FIRST supposition, i.e. **"THAT JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA SECRETLY REMOVED THE BODY TO A MORE SUITABLE RESTING PLACE"**. After confessing that this Joseph "might himself have removed it for private reasons to another place, *is one which seems to carry considerable weight"* (italics mine), he hurriedly disposes this hypothesis on the flimsiest ground. As you read on, dear reader, I trust that you as well as Mr Morison will have a satisfactory answer to this problem. Let us begin at the beginning of this problem.

It was Sunday morning, according to the Bible, the first day of the week, when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus (John 20:1). The first question that bedevils the mind is:-

Q1: WHY DID SHE GO TO THE TOMB?
Ans: The Gospel writers say that she went to **"anoint"** him. The Hebrew word for anoint is **"masaha",** which means - 'to rub', 'to massage', 'to anoint'. The word and its meaning are the same in the Arabic language also. From this root word "masaha" we get the Arabic word **"MASEEH"** and the Hebrew **"MESSIAH"** both meaning the same thing - "the anointed one" which is translated into Greek as **"Christos"** from which we derive the word Christ.

Q2: DO JEWS MASSAGE DEAD BODIES AFTER THREE DAYS?
Ans: "No!"

Q3: DO MUSLIMS MASSAGE DEAD BODIES AFTER THREE DAYS?
Ans: "No!"

Q4: DO CHRISTIANS MASSAGE DEAD BODIES AFTER THREE DAYS?
Ans: "No!"

It is common knowledge that within three hours after death, **rigor mortis** sets in - the breaking up of the body cells - the hardening of the body. In three days the corpse starts rotting from within. If we massage such a rotting body, it will fall to pieces.

Q5: DOES IT MAKE SENSE THAT MARY MAGDALENE WANTS TO MASSAGE A ROTTING DEAD BODY AFTER THREE DAYS?
Ans: It makes no sense, unless we confess that she was looking for a L-I·V·E Jesus, not a dead one. You will recognise this fact for yourself on analysing her reactions towards Jesus when she eventually saw through his disguise. You see, she had seen signs of life in that limp body when it was taken down from the cross. She was about the only woman beside Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who had given the final (?) rites to the body of Jesus. This man NICODEMUS, somehow, has been deliberately blotted out by the synoptists. The Gospel writers of Matthew, Mark and Luke are totally ignorant of this devoted and self-sacrificing disciple of Jesus. His name is NOT even mentioned in the first three Gospels in ANY context. **"it is difficult to avoid concluding that the omission in the synoptic tradition of the mysterious disciple was intentional",** says Dr Hugh J Schonfield, one of the world's leading Biblical scholars.

When Mary of **Magdala** reached the tomb, she found that the stone had already been rolled away, and the winding sheets bundled on the ledge within the sepulcher. The question now arises:

Q6: WHY WAS THE STONE REMOVED, AND WHY WERE THE WINDING SHEETS FOUND UNWOUND?
Ans: Because it would be impossible for any tangible material body to come out with the stone blocking the opening, and the same physical body could not walk out with the winding sheets encasing the body. For a resurrected body, it would have been unnecessary to remove the stone or to unwind the winding sheets. Probably having the resurrected, immortalized body, or the spirit of man in mind, a poet said: "STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE, NOR IRON BARS A CAGE".

While the poor, dejected Mary was investigating the sepulcher, Jesus was watching her from the vicinity. Not from heaven, but from **terra firma,** from mother earth. We must remember that this tomb was a privately owned property belonging to his "secret disciple" Joseph of Arimathea - who was a very rich, influential Jew, and one who could afford to have carved a big roomy chamber, out of a rock which according to Jim Bishop (a Christian scholar of note) was 5 feet wide by 7 feet high by 15 feet deep with a ledge or ledges inside. Around this tomb was this "secret disciple's" own vegetable garden. It is hardly expected of any Jew or Gentile to grow vegetables 5 miles out of town for other peoples' sheep and goats to graze upon! Surely, this husbandman must have provided his labourers with the gardeners' quarters to protect his own interests, and perhaps he also had his 'country home' around the place where he could relax with his family during the weekends.

Jesus was watching his lady disciple out of whom he had cast out seven devils. He comes up to her. He finds her crying. He questions her, **"Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"** (John 20:15).

Q7: DOESN'T HE KNOW? WHY DOES HE ASK SUCH A SEEMINGLY SILLY QUESTION?
Ans: He knew why she was crying, and he knew who she was looking for and he was not asking any silly questions. Actually, he was pulling her leg, figuratively of course! He knew that she was looking for him in the tomb, and not finding him there, was crying in her disappointment. He also knew that she would not be able to see through his disguise. Though he had been through an ordeal, he still had that sense of humour to ask her, **"Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?** "SHE SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER, SAITH UNTO HIM" (John 20:15).

08: WHY DID SHE THINK THAT HE (JESUS) WAS A GARDENER? DO RESURRECTED BODIES LOOK LIKE GARDENERS?
Ans: Can you imagine the scene on the RESURRECTION DAY, that you, dear reader, will be made to look like a **"gardener"** and your father-in-law will also be transformed into a **"gardener"** and your son-in-law will also be made to look like a **"gardener"** and your beloved wife will be left in confusion to find her husband! Does this make sense? No! The resurrected body will be you, yourself! Everyone will readily recognize you. It will be the REAL you and not your camouflage. Never mind at what age or under what

condition one dies, everyone will know one another. Then why did Mary think that Jesus was a **"gardener"?**
Ans: Because Jesus was **DISGUISED** as a gardener.

Q9: WHY WAS HE DISGUISED AS A GARDENER?
Ans: Because he was **AFRAID** of the Jews.

Q10: WHY WAS HE AFRAID OF THE JEWS?
Ans: Because he had not **DIED** and was not RESURRECTED. If he had DIED and if he was RESURRECTED he would not have any reason to be **AFRAID.** Why? Because the resurrected body can't **DIE** twice. Who says so? The Bible says so: ".... **it is ordained unto all men ONCE to die, and after that the judgment."** (Hebrew 9:27). The idea that the resurrected person cannot die TWICE is further supported by what Jesus Christ had most authoritatively pronounced regarding the resurrection.

The learned men of the Jews came to Jesus with a poser, a riddle. They said that there was a woman who had seven husbands in turn. **"in the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her."** (Matthew 22:28). Jesus could have brushed off the Jews with some curt retort because here was another of their tricks to catch him out. Instead, he has enshrined for us the dearest statement in the Bible regarding the resurrected soul. He said, **"Neither shall they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and the children of God, for such are the children of the resurrection"** (Luke 20:36).

"NEITHER SHALL THEY DIE ANYMORE" - that they will be immortalised. They will not be subjected to death a SECOND time. No more hunger and thirst. No more fatigue or physical dangers. Because the resurrected body will be 'angelised' - spiritualised - they will become like spirit creatures, they will become SPIRITS.

Mary Magdalene was not looking for a spirit. She, taking the disguised Jesus to be a gardener, says, **"Sir, if you have taken HIM hence, tell me where have you LAID him..."** (John 20:15). Note, she is searching for HIM and not IT - a dead body. Further, she wants to know as to where they had LAID him, not as to where they had BURIED him? So that, **"I might take HIM away."** (John 20:15).

Q11: WHAT DOES SHE WANT TO DO WITH A DECOMPOSING CORPSE?
Ans: She wants to put it under her bed? Absurd! She wants to embalm him? Nonsense! She wants to bury him? If so, who dug the grave? No! No! **'she wants to take him away'.**

Q12: HOW CAN SHE ALONE CARRY A DEAD BODY?
Ans: She is not thinking of a dead, rotting corpse. She is looking for the L-I-V-E Jesus. She is not a "super-woman" of the American comics, who could with ease carry a corpse of at least a hundred and sixty pounds, wrapped with another **'hundred pounds weight of aloes and myrrh'** (John 19:39) making a neat bundle of 260 pounds. This frail Jewess was not expected to carry this decaying parcel like a bundle of straws. Even if she could carry it, how was she to bury it ALONE? She might have had to dump it in some hole like a heap of rubbish. But dumping and burying are poles apart.

She was looking for a Jesus who was very much alive, a Jesus she could hold by the hand and take him home for rest, relaxation and recuperation, **"so that, I might take him away".**

The joke that Jesus was playing on this woman had gone too far. During the whole course of the dialogue between Mary and Jesus, she did not suspect in the least that she was actually talking to her Master. She had failed to see through the gardener's DISGUISE. Jesus must have been laughing under his breath. He could suppress it no longer. **"M·A·R·Y!"** he uttered. Only one word, but it was enough. This one word **"Mary!"** did, all that the exchange of words failed to do. It enabled Mary to recognise Jesus. Everyone has his own unique and peculiar way of calling his or her near one or dear one. It was not the mere sound of the name, but the way he must have deliberately intoned it that made Mary to respond - "Master!, Master!" She lunged forward to grab her spiritual master, to pay her respects and to give reverence.

The Muslims, when they meet their learned men, or respected elders or saintly people, hold such person's right hand in the palm of their own hands and fondly kiss the back of the respected one's hand. The Frenchman kisses the cheeks to show respect and the Arab kisses the neck. Mary the Jewess would have done what any Muslim might have done under similar circumstances.

When Mary makes the effort, Jesus shies back a step or two, saying, **"TOUCH me not,"** (John 20:17).

Q13: I SAY - WHY NOT?
Is he a current of electricity or a dynamo, that if she touches him, she will get electrocuted?
Ans: No! Don't touch me, because it will hurt. Though he had given no indication of any physical pain or injury he might have suffered, it would be excruciatingly painful if he now allowed her to touch him with love and affection. Can another reason be advanced for this **"Touch me not"?**
Jesus continues, **"For I am not yet ASCENDED unto my Father;"** (John 20:17).

Q14: IS SHE BLIND?
Could she not see that the man she was talking to all the time was standing before her? Does it make any sense when he (Jesus) says that - 'HE IS NOT GONE UP', when he is DOWN right here.
Ans: What Jesus is telling Mary in so many different words is that 'HE IS NOT RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD', for in the colloquial language and idiom of the Jew, the expression, **"For I am not yet ASCENDED unto my Father"** means **- "I AM NOT DEAD YET'.**

It is a sad fact of history that though the Christian Bible is an Eastern Book, full of eastern metaphors and similes, like - **"Let the dead bury their dead"** (Matthew 8:22) or **"Seeing they see not and hearing they hear not"** (Matthew 13:13), all the commentators of the Bible have come from the West. The Western World is made to see a Jewish Book, written by the Jews for a Jewish audience, through Greek and Western glasses. An Eastern book ought to be read as an Easterner would read and understand it. All the problems would then be solved.

The difficulty lies not only in apprehending the correct meaning of the Jewish expressions, but Christendom is so programmed that Christians of every race and language group are made to understand the passages differently or opposite to their literal connotations. I will give examples of this anomaly in Lesson No. 3 under the heading **"RESURRECTION OR RESUSCITATION?"** In that booklet, I will also endeavor to answer the problem as to why one woman - Mary Magdalene - was not AFRAID when she recognised the DISGUISED Jesus yet ten brave men (the Disciples of Jesus) were PETRIFIED on recognising their Master in that 'upper-room', after his alleged passion.

SIMPLE ANSWER

As to the original question of this pamphlet - **"WHO MOVED THE STONE?"** the answer is so simple and so natural that one is at a loss to understand how this problem has eluded Christian scholars of the highest eminence.

The answer to the question, "WHO ROLLED THE STONE INTO PLACE?" is the answer to the title of this tract. "....and **HE** (Joseph of Arimathea) **rolled a stone against the door of the tomb"** (Mark 15:46). St. Mark is here supported word by word by St. Matthew who in Chapter 27 and verses 60 states that "....**HE** (Joseph of Arimathea) **rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and departed".** If this ONE man alone could move the stone into place as witnessed by Matthew and Mark, then let me be more generous in adding the name of the other faithful 'secret disciple' - NICODEMUS. It was JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA and NICODEMUS, the two stalwarts who did not leave the Master in the lurch when he was most in need. These two had given to Jesus a Jewish burial (?) bath, and wound the sheets with the **"aloes and myrrh",** and temporarily moved the stone into place, if at all; they were the same two real friends who REMOVED THE STONE, and took their shocked Master soon after dark, that same Friday night to a more congenial place in the immediate vicinity for treatment. Reasoning even on the Biblical narration, Jesus was A-L-I-V-E! He had escaped death by the skin of his teeth, as he himself had fortold. Write for your FREE copy of "WHAT WAS THE SIGN OF JONAH?", as well as for a detailed account of the alleged "crucifixon", under the heading, **"CRUCIFIXION or CRUCI-FICTION?"**

Those of you who have already mastered Lesson No. 1 from the booklet **"WHAT WAS THE SIGN OF JONAH?"** will now do well to memorise the following verses for your Lesson No. 2.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him. Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him. Rabboni, which is to say, Master.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my father:...." John 20:15-17

APPENDIX

The Muslim reader of this and other allied tracts may be tempted to ask, **"Do we Muslims need to use the Bible to get at the Truth of God?"**

The answer is an emphatic NO!
The Muslim position is very clear:

1) Sin is not inherited.
2) The "Trinity" is a fabrication.
3) Jesus is not God.
4) God does not beget sons or daughters.
5) Christ was neither killed nor crucified.

These doctrines are expounded in the most unambiguous terms in the Holy Qur'an. Why, then, must the Muslim adduce the Christian Scriptures to prove his point of view? This is because we are dealing with a mind which has been programmed from childhood to accept dogmas without reasoning. Today, the Christian is groping for the Truth. He is asking questions which he did not dare to ask a few centuries ago.

Questions like:-

a) IS JESUS GOD?
b) WHAT WAS THE SIGN OF JONAH?
c) IS THE BIBLE GOD'S WORD?
d) WHO MOVED THE STONE?
e) WAS JESUS CHRIST AN IMPOSTER? (A Christian Magazine "Plain Truth" - April '77), etc

It is the duty of the Muslim to help his Christian brethren, **"The Ahle-Kitab",** i.e. "THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK" - as they are respectfully addressed in the pages of the Holy Qur'ân, in freeing them from the shackles that bind their thinking for the past two thousand years. It instructs us:

Ye are the best

Of Peoples, evolved

For mankind,

Enjoining what is right,

Forbidding what is wrong,

And believing in God,

If only the People of the Book

Had faith, it were best

For them: among them

Are some who have faith,

But most of them

Are perverted transgressors. Holy Qur’ân 3: 110

In this treatise and others, we have used the Christians' own book of authority, the BIBLE, and his own logic, to refute his claims. This is the system which Allah **Subha nahu Wa Ta'aala** uses when reasoning with His creatures.

The Holy Qur’ân commands the Muslim to demand from the Jews and the Christians their authority for their fanciful claims that "SALVATION" is exclusively their right.

It says: **"Produce your proof if ye are truthful."**

Holy Qur’ân 2:111

The Christian has already reproduced the Bible in over a thousand languages and broadcasts it to the four corners of the globe, terrifying the nations of the world to accept the "BLOOD OF THE LAMB", that Christ died for the sins of mankind, that he (Jesus) is the only saviour. **All this is against the clear evidence of his own Holy Book.**

We must free him (the Christian) from his illusions, and there is no better way than to use his own evidence, his own logic, to refute his claims.